

### SAN FRANCISCO

**Dr. George Pierce** of San Francisco was elected president of the American Association of Plastic Surgeons at a conference of that organization in Toronto early in June. He succeeds Dr. John S. Davis of Baltimore.

**Sanitary conditions** in bars and restaurants was principal topic when San Francisco Grand Jury discussed the city's health problems with Dr. J. C. Geiger, Health Director, in a June meeting. Dr. Geiger told the jury about one-third of these establishments fall below minimum standards and are cited under the health code as fast as violations are discovered. Germ cultures made from swabs taken from dishes, glasses and silverware are the main means of check-up.

**Wallet-size cards certifying birth registration**, and carrying data useful in identification, proving citizenship and establishing the age of the bearer, have been made available to persons born in San Francisco County.

The cards, issued on application as an alternative to the usual complete copy of the birth certificate, do not include medical details and personal information regarding parents. They are issued by the Department of Public Health on payment of a one-dollar charge, the same fee that is required for issuance of a detailed copy of the birth certificate.

### SAN JOAQUIN

**Dr. C. V. Thompson**, California Medical Association Councillor-at-Large from the Fourth District, has reopened his offices in Lodi. Dr. Thompson had been in the Army from early 1941 until his recent discharge with rank of colonel.

### SAN MATEO

**Dr. V. H. Heinz** is planning to open offices in Burlingame, where he practiced before entering the Navy Medical Corps four and a half years ago.

### SANTA CLARA

**Dr. E. I. Bartlett** has disposed of his share in the South San Francisco General Hospital to Dr. Thomas

McVeagh of Palo Alto, who formerly practiced in Hawaii. Dr. Bartlett will continue to teach in the surgical department of the University of California Medical School and will maintain limited practice in his San Francisco office. Dr. McVeagh will be associated in the hospital with Dr. Wendell H. Musselman and Dr. M. R. Oliva, who also own shares.

**Dr. Charles E. Schoff** has been named medical house officer at the Palo Alto Hospital, and Dr. William Clinite, a surgeon, also has been added to the resident staff. Plans are to add an obstetrician later. Idea behind the three-man resident staff is to eliminate delay in handling emergency cases and reduce the number of emergency calls the community's physicians in private practice are required to answer.

**Recent advances in cell respiration** were discussed by Professor John Field of Stanford University's physiology department at a May dinner meeting at Stanford Union, which was attended by 45 physicians interested in anesthesiology as a medical specialty. Dr. Field's paper dealt with advances and anticipated progress in anesthesia, hormone and cancer research. It was discussed by Dr. John Dillon, Army Medical Corps, of Letterman Hospital, and by others at the meeting. The dinner meeting brought together the Northern California branch of the American Society of Anesthesiologists and the Palo Alto anesthesia research group.

### SONOMA

**Dr. A. Morse Bowles**, Santa Rosa, has been elected to the California Academy of Medicine.

### TULARE

**Post of health officer for Tulare County**, recently resigned by Dr. A. E. Raitt, has been offered to Dr. Walter B. Quisenberry of Lincoln, Nebraska, at a salary of \$6,000 a year. Dr. Quisenberry had applied for the position, asking \$6,600. County supervisors say the applicant qualifies for the post. He received his training at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, has served in public health positions in Virginia, Nebraska, the United States Public Health Service and the armed forces.

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## INFORMATION

### Sickness Unemployment Benefits

Under terms of a new California law, practicing physicians are confronted with the task of certifying the physical or mental condition and the probable duration of illness of persons applying for such certification as a prerequisite to collection of unemployment benefits available to them if they are unemployed because of sickness or injury.

The provision for benefit payments in such cases is contained in a recent amendment to the California Unemployment Insurance Act. Because of alternate provisions for financing the payments, the date when payments will begin is not certain. It may be set earlier than May, 1947, but not later.

Although some burden of paper work as well as professional judgment falls upon the physicians in the certification process, James G. Bryant, chairman of the California Employment Stabilization Commission which administers the law, has promised a minimum of red tape in setting up the administrative structure. In a letter to Dr. Philip K. Gilman, then president of the California Medical Association, Mr. Bryant said the commission will strive for "the least possible burden on the physicians" and that there will be "no interference with their relationships with their patients."

## DIGEST OF EFFECT ON PHYSICIANS

A digest of provisions of the law affecting physicians follows:

The Legislature at the Special Session held during January and February, 1946, enacted a new law amending the Unemployment Insurance Act to add to the benefits of that act payment of weekly compensation (in amounts varying from \$10 to \$20 per week) to persons unemployed because of sickness or injury. This new law was actively sponsored by Governor Warren, by Senator John F. Shelley, of San Francisco, and the State Federation of Labor. The law adds no new tax; instead it diverts to the Sickness Disability Fund the 1% payroll tax on employees which has heretofore been used along with the employer's tax to finance unemployment compensation.

Under the new law any person who goes off the payroll of his employer due to a "disability" is entitled to receive money payments from the California Employment Stabilization Commission in the same amount and to the same extent that he would have received if unemployed for other causes. Employees who are disabled are to secure their disability compensation checks through public employment offices and in the same manner as unemployment compensation is paid.

## EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of the new law is not certain. It is provided that disability benefits become payable either one year after the effective date of the new law (which would be in May, 1947) or ninety days after the Social Security Board decides that 1944 and 1945 payroll taxes already collected and in the Federal treasury may be used to finance the new disability benefit law, if the Social Security Board should so decide. It is very questionable that the Social Security Board will permit taxes collected from California employees in 1944 and 1945 and already transmitted to Washington to be returned to Sacramento; but if it does, then the new law would go into effect within ninety days from such time. Hence, the effective date may be at any time before May, 1947, but no later than that.

To become entitled to "disability benefits" an employee must be suffering a *non-industrial* illness or injury, physical or mental, which renders him "unable to perform his regular or customary work." Pregnancy is expressly excluded from the definition of disability. The law provides two major prerequisites which an employee must fulfil in order to collect benefits. First, there is a mandatory waiting period of seven consecutive days for each "period of disability." Second, after the waiting period of seven days the employee must, in addition, furnish the Employment Stabilization Commission with a "certificate" from a "physician" certifying (a) "as to the disability of the claimant," and (b) as to the "estimated duration of such disability." The new law defines a "physician" as a doctor of medicine or an osteopathic physician and surgeon or a chiropractor.

If, after waiting seven days and presenting a "physician's certificate," a claimant is turned down by the

Employment Commission, he may demand a closed hearing before a referee. The law provides that all medical records of the commission are secret and confidential, and may not be opened to public inspection. It is not clear whether the "physician's certificate" is included as a "medical record of the commission."

## TEST OF EMPLOYABILITY

The new law also provides for "voluntary plans" of disability benefits, either by employers themselves or through private insurance companies. However, the law does not lay down any medical requirements for payment of disability to be used by voluntary plans; therefore, it may be assumed that if voluntary plans do operate under the law the reports or certificates required by them will be somewhat similar to those now required by health and accident insurance companies.

Each practicing physician should bear in mind that when the new disability benefits law goes into effect, he will be called upon from time to time to fill out and sign "physician's certificates" for use by his patients in attempting to collect disability benefits from the California Employment Stabilization Commission. Under the law, the test for determining whether a person is or is not entitled to disability benefits is as follows: Is the patient "unable to perform his regular or customary work" due to a physical or mental illness or injury (other than an illness arising in connection with pregnancy) that is non-industrial in origin? The certificate of the physician is supposed to include two statements: First, whether the patient is suffering from a disability, as above defined; and, second, the estimated duration of such disability.

The law thus imposes upon physicians (including in that term, for the purposes of this law, both osteopaths and chiropractors) the duty of determining both the physical or mental condition of the patient and whether or not such condition renders the patient "unable to perform his regular or customary work," plus an estimated duration.

Each physician will be thus placed in a position of being a judge as to whether his patient is entitled to any payments under the provisions of the law. If a physician completes and signs certificates in cases where disability is very doubtful, a record will be made against him by a government bureau, and it is not even clear under the law whether such records are secret. If a physician refuses to complete and sign the certificates in all doubtful cases, he will undoubtedly be severely criticized by some of his patients. It will be very important for each doctor of medicine to use his best efforts to be extremely fair in signing or refusing to sign physician's certificates under the disability benefits law.

The exact form of physician's certificate will be determined by the California Employment Stabilization Commission, and every effort will be made by the California Medical Association to cause the commission to adopt as workable a form as may be devised under the severe limitations of the law. When a physician's certificate form is adopted by the commission, all members of the association will be advised.

